



INSIDE INDIA

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March 8 - International Women's Day

Muslim Women's Group Receives OneWoman Initiative Grant to Empower Women

Not that many years ago, Asma, a Muslim woman from Jaipur, was living an intolerable existence with an abusive husband and extended family who beat and verbally abused her. By chance she heard about the Muslim Women's Initiative (MWI), a USAID supported program that has been working in Rajasthan and Karnataka to increase Muslim women's awareness of their rights under Islam and the constitution, to build their self-esteem, and to encourage discussion on stemming domestic violence. This initiative is part of USAID's broader program to promote women's legal rights in India. With the support of the

women and men involved in the MWI in her community, Asma was able to confront her family, secure in the knowledge that she was no longer alone. Today, those who know Asma marvel at the transformation of the broken and desperate woman of three years ago into the confident business woman who now employs ten people – including four men – in her own sewing business. Asma credits the MWI program and the support it provided for this



The power of sisterhood at the OneWoman Initiative event in Jaipur.
Photo Kathryn Viguerie/USAID

remarkable turn around. In addition to gaining self-confidence and enterprise skills, she also re-enrolled her daughter in school, thus ensuring a second generation of empowered women.



Women showcased their businesses at the event.
Photo Kathryn Viguerie/USAID

As a result of the initiative, thousands of Muslim women are now emerging as development agents within their communities, helping to empower women like Asma, who are some of the most vulnerable in India: those who have the triple burden of being poor, female, and from a minority religion. Many of these women were in Jaipur last week to celebrate their successes and the award of a new grant from the OneWoman Initiative (OWI), an international women's empowerment fund administered by USAID and the U.S. State Department with the resources and experience of a diverse group of private sector co-chairs. OWI invests seed grants to existing

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projects that have demonstrated success in enabling women to realize their potential.

Building on USAID's program, OWI awarded \$100,000 to the Group for Urban and Rural Development (GUARD) for its work helping women realize their legal rights, social empowerment, and leadership potential through the MWI. Because knowledge is only the first step for women to realize their full potential, Guard will use the additional support for a new initiative, called "Burlandi" (Hindi for "uplifting"), to focus on enterprise development.

The joyful event, held in the shadow of the beautiful Amber Fort outside of Jaipur, included songs, speeches, skits, and poems. But by far the most moving and resonant element of the program were the many testimonials from the women who have been and will continue to benefit from the work of the Muslim Women's Initiative. One by one, women stood up to tell their often painful but always inspiring stories.

The OneWoman Initiative is bound by the belief that one woman, with appropriate support, can help transform whole economies and regions.

Nine year old Aisha perfectly illustrated that sentiment. Although little Aisha witnessed her mother, Rafat's, first abusive marriage, she also saw the support her mother received from the MWI that enabled her to divorce the husband and move on. Now happily re-married and confident, Rafat is an inspiration to her daughter, who recently formed her own group of young girls committed to working on issues of domestic violence, cleanliness, and education. Realizing at a young age the power of one person to transform others, Aisha led a school procession against terrorism following the tragic events in Mumbai. Aisha and her mother spoke eloquently of their experiences and, with Rafat's mother proudly looking on, three generations of empowered women were together at the event.



Rafat and Aisha: one generation empowering another. Photo Kathryn Viguerie/USAID

U.S. Energy Efficiency Experts Share Their Experience

"Improving energy efficiency is the fastest way to delay global warming, and it saves money," said Dr. Arthur Rosenfeld, Commissioner of the California Energy Commission (CEC) at a USAID sponsored event this week at the American Center. For more than 30 years, California has been at the forefront of successful development and implementation of "clean" energy policies, particularly energy efficiency, in the U.S.

Sharing the California experience, Dr. Rosefeld was joined by Ms. Dian Grueneich, Commissioner of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in a talk on "The Role and Importance of Energy Efficiency in the Formulation of Regulatory and Policy Frameworks - The California Experience." The two internationally recognized experts in energy efficiency are in India as part of a U.S. delegation meeting with Indian policy makers and regulators to share the U.S. experience and insights on energy efficiency.

While the demand for energy in India is expected to grow at an annual rate of nearly six percent over the next ten years, finding adequate supplies of energy to satisfy this increased demand is

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a significant challenge. Energy efficiency is one of the most important technology and policy choices available to help India meet its energy demand while pursuing a low carbon strategy. Emphasizing the critical importance of efficiency in any national strategy, Dr. Rosenfeld said, "of course we must also invest in new, renewable supplies of energy, but less of it than most people think."

USAID Launches Two Important Chennai Health Initiatives **Toll-free HIV/AIDS Helpline**



Kerry Pelzman, Director, USAID Office of Population, Health and Nutrition, and others look on as Tamil Nadu State Health Secretary V.K. Subburaj makes the first call on the new helpline. *Photo USAID*

USAID/India formally launched a toll free telephone helpline for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in Tamil Nadu last month. The Hello+ Helpline, which addresses a critical need for PLHIV to be able to confidentially discuss their health concerns and receive information and counseling on HIV/AIDS with trained professionals, is the result of a public-private partnership between USAID and the Tata Business Support Services, one of the largest third party customer service providers in India. The Hello+ Helpline's multi-lingual counselors are available sixteen hours a day, free of charge to answer questions, provide confidential support, and direct callers to qualified healthcare providers or NGOs if needed.

The USAID supported AIDS Prevention and Control (APAC) project has been engaged in HIV/AIDS

programs in Tamil Nadu since 1995 and has made a critical contribution to the stabilization of the HIV epidemic in Tamil Nadu. Having successfully stemmed the epidemic, the state is now considered a success story, although a sustained effort continues to further reduce infections and provide care and treatment for the infected and affected. The project works closely with the Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control society (TANSACS), CDC, and other donors and continues to support innovative initiatives which have been adapted by TANSACS and the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO).

TB Initiative Launched

USAID also launched the TB Advocacy, Communication, and Social Mobilization (ACSM) project in Tamil Nadu last month. The event in Chennai was organized by REACH, one of the NGO consortium members under USAID's ACSM project, led by World Vision. REACH works with lower socio-economic groups on critical community health issues. Under ACSM, REACH is carrying out TB interventions in three districts of Tamil Nadu to build the capacity of community-based organizations for improved advocacy, communication, and social mobilization related to TB control. REACH has been active in TB control for many years, but under USAID's TB ACSM project, it will increase technical support to improve and scale up successful TB interventions, as it expands into rural areas of Tamil Nadu.

At the conclusion of the launch ceremony, 40 representatives from health-focused community and faith based organizations and self-help groups received training on advocacy, communication, and social mobilization activities to increase community awareness of TB issues, particularly the effectiveness of the Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course treatment and how non-compliance with drug regimens can result in multi-drug resistant strains of TB. They also received training on how to improve TB detection and help TB infected individuals in their communities complete their courses of treatment.

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